

Remarks

Applicants acknowledge receipt of the non-final Office Action dated August 23, 2006 in which the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3-6, 11, 12, 15-19 and 24 as anticipated by Simpson (US 5,649,603), rejected claims 13, 14, 25 and 26 as obvious in view of Simpson and Ng (US 6,162,171), and indicated that claims 7-10, and 20-23 would be allowable if placed in independent form.

Applicants appreciate the re-opening of prosecution in this case. Applicants have amended the claims and respectfully submit that the claims are now in condition for allowance.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

To overcome the rejection of claims 1-6, 11, 12, 15-19 and 24 as anticipated by Simpson US 5,649,603, claims 1 and 15 have been amended to require that each of the pitched wheels is positioned at a different point along the length of the robot “such that no two pitched wheels are at the same point along the length of the robot.” This limitation does not constitute new matter, as it echoes the intended subject matter of original claim 2 and the embodiments shown in Figures 8-14.

The relevance of this limitation is as follows: *when the pitched wheels do not share an axial location, the tool is more versatile, as some obstructions can be avoided by allowing the robot body to shift away from the affected wheel. By contrast, when two or more pitched wheels are present at a single position along the length of the robot, as taught in the references, the robot is constrained in the degree to which it can traverse obstacles in its path.*

While Simpson teaches a device having sets of wheels at different locations along the tool axis, each wheel in Simpson shares its axial position with the other wheels in its set. Simpson neither teaches nor discloses a device having each wheel at a different axial position. Applicants therefore respectfully submit that claims 1 and 15 as amended and the claims that depend from them are allowable over the art of record.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Applicants respectfully submit that the foregoing reason also distinguishes dependent claims 13, 14, 25, and 26 over the combination of Simpson with Ng.

Allowable claims

Claims 7 and 20 remain in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner's consider the foregoing amendments and arguments and withdraw the rejections and allow all of the pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions or comments regarding the foregoing, he is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at (713) 238-8043.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marcella D. Watkins', is written over a horizontal line.

Marcella D. Watkins

Reg. No. 36,962

CONLEY ROSE, P.C.

P. O. Box 3267

Houston, Texas 77253-3267

(713) 238-8000

ATTORNEY FOR APPLICANT